

Marklund breaks ground of \$9M day school addition

By BRENDA SCHORY

'We could not have done this without the generosity of our donors'

BLACKBERRY TOWNSHIP (July 10, 2019)— Marklund at Mill Creek officials and friends gathered July 9 for a groundbreaking ceremony on the charity's new \$9 million therapeutic day school.

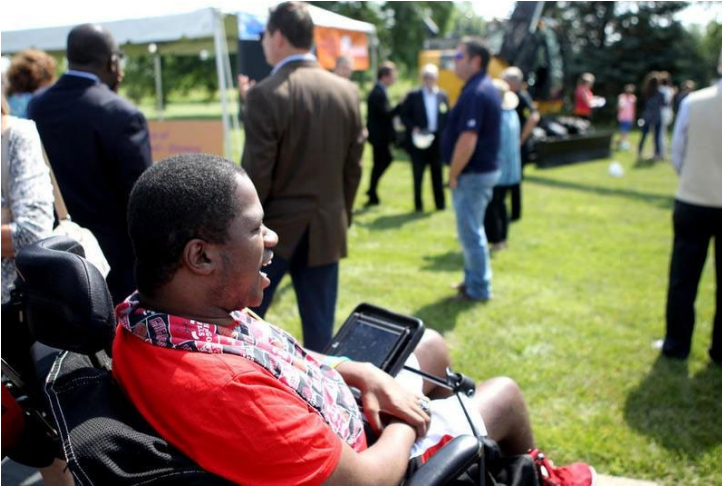
The two-story day school will serve 66 children who are non-ambulatory and non-verbal, and 36 children on the autism spectrum, from age 3 to 21, officials said.



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[(From left) Gil Fonger, president and CEO of Marklund, Geneva Mayor Kevin Burns, St. Charles Mayor Ray Rogina, State Sen. Jim Oberweis (R-Sugar Grove), Batavia Mayor Jeff Schielke and Kane County Board Member Drew Frasz break ground for the Marklund Day School - Geneva on July 9.]

The school is a long-planned expansion to the residential service it provides to adults with profound developmental disabilities on its campus in Blackberry Township near Geneva.



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[Darren, a client at Marklund's Hyde Center, watches during a groundbreaking ceremony for the Marklund Day School - Geneva on July 9.]

A handful of the residential clients, along with their caregivers, were lined up on the sidewalk in their wheelchairs for the ceremony. A group of shovels and hard hats were positioned in a trench cut into the grass along with a backhoe.



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[Clients, friends and employees of Marklund's Hyde Center watch during a groundbreaking ceremony for the Marklund Day School - Geneva on July 9.]

Frank Murnane Jr., chairman of the Marklund board of directors, spoke of the need for a therapeutic day school, as there are only two in Kane County.

“The school is a key part of our mission to make everyday life possible for individuals with profound disabilities,” Murnane said.

Murnane said \$3.1 million has been raised so far to build the school.

“It has been said that you make a living by what you earn, but a life by what you give,” Murnane said. “We could not have done this without the generosity of our donors. We are deeply grateful for the support of our community for this very important project.”



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[A groundbreaking ceremony was held for the Marklund Day School - Geneva on July 9.]

Marklund CEO Gil Fonger introduced Kane County Board member Drew Frasz, R-Elburn, as a friend and supporter of Marklund and its mission.

Since its inception in the early 1990s, Marklund was planned to be a part of the Mill Creek community, Frasz said.

“It’s just been a wonderful neighbor and a complete success,” Frasz said, as he has never heard a complaint about Marklund in the 12 years he's served on the county board.

“So with this new school coming on, it’s much needed,” Frasz said. “Elementary school residents will arrive on buses and in cars and head home just like the two other elementary school schools in the neighborhood – but serving special needs.”



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[Kane County Board member Drew Frasz gives remarks during a groundbreaking ceremony for the Marklund Day School - Geneva on July 9.]

Frasz noted that neighborhood had concerns about the original design of the school, which had been three stories. It was reduced to two stories and with additional architectural design, neighbors' concerns were relieved.

“By the time it got to the County Board’s official process, everybody walked in hand-in-hand as neighbors,” Frasz said. “Probably one of the best experiences I’ve had with 12 years on the board with the zoning. A complete success.”

Frasz noted Marklund was having “a little problem” with the water reclamation district, but was hoping things would move forward quickly.

“I look forward to seeing you all back here again for the ribbon cutting for the new school,” Frasz said.



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[Principal and Director of Education Paula Bodzioch and Teaghan help break ground for the Marklund Day School - Geneva on July 9.]

Rev. Sterling Moore, pastor of the nearby Chapel Street Church’s Mill Creek Campus, gave a blessing to the groundbreaking.

“We thank you for the generosity that has already been received from those who have given in order to support this vision and for that which remains we pray for your provision,” Moore said. “God, we thank you for Marklund and this community. We thank you for the residents, for the staff ... the families who share in this vision. And we pray that you would continue to bless them and watch over them. And we pray for this project.”